

BUSINESS AND LAW

WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

HANDBOOK - BOOK 3

RECRUITMENT & INTERVIEWS

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Book 3

RECRUITMENT

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RECRUITMENT

Employers use a range of strategies and techniques to recruit new staff. Telephone screening/telephone interviewing, group interviews, Assessment Centres, psychometric testing and personal or face-to-face interviewing are some of the methods you may come across in a professional recruitment process. Employers may use one or two of these components or all of them. As with application development, preparation is the key. Below are some guidelines to help you prepare for the recruitment process.

1. THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS



A thorough recruitment process ensures that an organisation recruits its employees based on genuine merit, knowledge, skills and abilities that will fit the available position. This may be undertaken directly by the employing organisation or on their behalf by an external consultant/agency.

Various techniques utilised within the recruitment process help an employer determine a candidate's values, beliefs and behaviour to see if they "fit" the culture of the organisation. Candidates that are considered to be unsuitable by an employer can be eliminated at any stage in the recruitment process.

There are a variety of methods used by organisations to assist in this process, some of which are outlined below.

1.1 Telephone Screening/Telephone Interviews

There are two main instances when an employer might initiate a telephone interview or conduct telephone screening.

- **Telephone Screening**

This is used as a prescreening tool for employers to assess your verbal communication, phone manner, friendliness and professionalism without making the time investment of a formal interview. Once you have applied for a job, the employer may call briefly to ask you some preliminary questions – you may or may not be aware that the employer is going to call you. Depending on your responses during this conversation, the employer will decide whether you will proceed to the next stage of the recruitment process.

- **Telephone Interview**

A pre-set time is organised for you to be interviewed over the telephone with one person or a group of people. This is like a formal face-to-face interview but is utilised when candidate and employer are physically unable to meet due to geography. They are particularly useful when applying for jobs interstate and overseas.



These telephone conversations can be advantageous as they may not show your nervousness and you may be able to refer to your résumé and notes. However, they can also be problematic because you cannot make as strong an impression through your professionalism or your personal presentation.

1.1.1 Telephone Interview Tips

As with any interview, preparation is the key, and most of the preparation for telephone interviews is similar to face-to-face interviews.



- Be ready for the unexpected and always answer your phone with the expectation that an employer could be calling. Once you have submitted a job application, it is important to be prepared for an employer to contact you at any time.
 - Ensure that your answering machine or mobile phone message is professional.
 - Advise your family and friends (or those who are likely to answer the telephone) that you may receive a telephone call from a potential employer so that they are also prepared to answer the telephone appropriately.
- Research the organisation that you have applied for; keep the job advertisement, position description and your résumé handy, and prepare answers to questions that you are likely to be asked. (See sections 4 & 5 of this handbook on Interview Questions).
 - Keep a notepad next to the phone or in your bag to write down any vital information or points that you need to recall. Keep your diary or calendar handy, ready to make a face-to-face interview appointment.
 - Don't drink, fidget, eat or smoke during a telephone interview and control background noise (e.g. television).
 - If you do not hear or understand the question, ask politely if the interviewer could restate the question.
 - Always communicate courteously and try to sound confident and relaxed.
 - Don't be fooled! – Just because the interview is over the phone, does not mean that it is not as formal or as serious as a face-to-face meeting i.e. you still need to practice interview answers and research the company.
 - Ensure you have made a note of the person you have spoken to and ask what the next stage will be e.g. face-to-face interview.
 - If appropriate, after your conversation with the employer, send an email thanking them for their time and that you look forward to the prospect of meeting them at an interview.

Remember, first impressions are vital and you can never be sure when an employer might call.

1.2 Assessment Centres

Assessment Centres are most commonly used for recruitment purposes for 'Volume Interviewing'. This is where a large number of potential employees are tested, via questions or hypothetical situations, tailored to the employer's requirements to find the best candidate for the position.

Assessment Centres allow employers to pre-screen many candidates at one location making recruiting more cost effective and timely and also provides an opportunity for a number of different selectors to see candidates over a longer period of time than is possible with a single interview. Assessment Centres are usually competitive with your peers from VU as well as students from other Universities and can run for a couple of hours or a whole day.

Generally, candidates are placed into a "virtual office" where a series of problem-solving tasks are administered. Often, the employer is trying to identify the competencies of individuals. For example, the ability to work in a group can be assessed for "team" skills in this forum, whereas with the standard one-to-one interview style, team skills cannot be visually assessed. Furthermore, leadership ability, communication skills, listening skills, problem-solving ability and logical thought patterns are measurable in group-based Assessment Centres.

1.2.1 Examples of Assessment Centre Activities

The following are based on actual Assessment Centre activities:

- **Situation Analysis**

You have one kidney but 10 people need it. Discuss in the group who should get the kidney and why. One person presents the outcome.

- **Business Based Issue**

You may be given a problem where you have to use your business mind, based on disciplines such as finance, marketing, economics etc. You may be asked to work out your answer individually, and then discuss it with the group.

- **Presentations**

You may be given a topic either in advance or on the day and need to present your findings or opinions to other candidates in the group, or directly to the assessors.

- **Role Plays**

You may have to assume a fictitious role and handle a work situation. For example, you are working in a customer service environment and must respond to queries and complaints. Or you are working in a sales environment and need to deliver a pitch to a customer.

- **Memory Capacity Exercises**

An employer may give you 5 minutes to talk to the person next to you, and then ask you to repeat back to the group whatever you remember from the conversation.

1.3 Group Interviews



Group interviews are becoming increasingly popular as a pre-screening tool. Employers are using these interviews to assess how applicants perform in a group situation, and to see how confidently they conduct themselves. They differ from an Assessment Centre in that there are a smaller number of candidates present, fewer formal assessment tasks (if any) and are usually no more than 1 ½ - 2 hours in duration.

The group interview is also an opportunity for the company to provide you with general information on the company and outline their expectations as well as collect application forms from candidates. They also enable an employer to assess your communication style, personal presentation and how you interact with other members of the group.

Common exercises include having to introduce yourself to other members of the group and describe yourself in a sentence or two, as well as practical tasks such as demonstrating how you might sell/promote one of the company's products. Be prepared to participate in all discussions and listen carefully to others. An employer will not be able to assess your potential if you do not say anything!

1.4 Psychometric Testing

Psychometric testing may be delivered within an Assessment Centre or separately as part of the overall recruitment process. The tests are often timed and the range of tests offered may include any or all of the following:

- Aptitude testing (verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning). Verbal and numerical tests will assess your English language and mathematical abilities respectively. Abstract tests usually require you to recognise patterns and similarities between shapes and figures and are regarded as a way of measuring general intelligence and intellectual potential. Questions for all three types of tests can be multiple choice or short answer and the tests are usually timed.
- Personality tests involving multiple choice or short answer questions. These tests usually comprise questions about teamwork, communication style and problem solving strategies.
- Essay style problem: a test where you are asked to provide written answers to a series of problems. Employers are usually trying to ascertain your pattern of thinking whilst problem solving.

Web sites which contain practice tests include:

- www.shlgroupp.com
- <http://www.psychometric-success.com>

(or you can search online for “aptitude tests” or “psychometric tests”.)

2. INTERVIEW PREPARATION



After you have submitted your application for a position you may be requested to attend a personal, face-to-face interview. The thought of an interview may give you feelings of overwhelming anxiety but being prepared can help a great deal. Interviews are usually held at the employer's workplace and can range from one-to-one interviews to panel interviews of up to three or more people from various departments within the organisation.

2.1 The Purpose of a Personal Interview

The interviewer (employer) wants to:

- find out more about you including your ability to perform the role and fit into the team;
- assess your interest in the position;
- leave you with a favourable impression of the organisation.

The interviewee (you) wants to:

- find out as much as possible about the company and the position;
- leave a favourable impression;
- make an assessment of the company.

2.2 Know What You Want

The first step towards a successful employment interview is self-assessment. It is logical for a person to attend an interview for positions that most closely match their own interests or goals. In order to begin defining these factors, asking yourself certain questions may be helpful.



- What type of organisation do I want to work for?
- What size organisation do I want to work for? Do I prefer working in a small operation or as part of a larger environment?
- Do I want to work in the government or private sector?
- Do I have any particular future goals?
- How far am I willing to travel for a job? Would I consider relocating interstate or overseas?
- Do I have any particular interests, skills or background experiences that might be relevant to a particular organisation?

2.3 What Employers Want To See

The following is a summary of behaviours and attitudes that employers are looking for in a personal interview.

Want To See	Don't Want To See
Good communication skills	Lack of knowledge about the company
Eye contact	Over-aggressiveness
Self-confidence	Indifference
Motivation	Expecting too much too soon from the job
Leadership	Nervousness, fidgeting
Ability to gain respect	Smoking or chewing
Professional appearance	Lazy or overly relaxed manner
Commitment	Too casual a communication style
Positive attitude	Vagueness
Enthusiasm	Excessive ambitiousness

2.4 What Matters To Employers

Attitude and communication skills ranked well above test scores or academic performance when 3000 employers (in the U.S.) were asked what they considered important when hiring non-supervisory workers. Respondents ranked the following characteristics on a scale that ranged from one (not important) to five (very important).

				✓	Applicant's attitude
				✓	Applicant's communication skills
				✓	Previous work experience
			✓		Recommendations from current employees
			✓		Previous employer's recommendations
			✓		Industry based credentials
			✓		Years of schooling completed
	✓				Scores on tests administered as part of interview
	✓				Academic performance (Grades)
	✓				Experience or reputation of applicant's school
	✓				Teacher recommendations
1	2	3	4	5	

Source: Inc. Magazine.

2.5 Preparation for the Personal Interview

Before attending any interview, it is vital that you prepare appropriately. You should find out as much as possible about the position and the organisation.

2.5.1 Research the Company



Research the company thoroughly using the internet, published material and personal contacts, so that you are able to ask 'intelligent' questions. Know something about the prospective employer's business – the type of product marketed or services performed, overall reputation, size and philosophy, where they are located throughout the world, what new developments are occurring in their business and in the relevant industry sector. Think about how your special skills and knowledge could fit into this business!

Resources that you may find useful include:

- Consult the company's Annual Report, which can usually be obtained by contacting the Company directly.
- Jobson's Yearbook of Australian Companies. Available in VU Library. Covers all publicly listed companies and major private companies. Includes a history of the company, 5 years of financial data and overview of operations.
- Australian Stock Exchange Yearbook. Available in VU Library. Provides basic information about every company listed on the Exchange, including data on performance, management and operations, plus 5 years of financial data.
- Kompas Australia. Available in VU Library. Covers over 20,000 smaller Australian companies.
- Business Who's Who of Australia. Available in VU Library. Covers over 16,000 public and private companies in the large to medium size range.
- Australia's top 500 Companies. Available in VU Library.

For further Company information, you can access the following online databases through VU Library. You may need to ask for passwords at the Library Information Desk.

- Factiva: (formerly Dow Jones Interactive) covers major news sources from both Australia and overseas, enabling you to search sources such as newspapers, etc on-line to access current information about various companies.
- IbisWorld: contains market research, industry, company and business environment reports. Contains 25 Industry Reports.

2.5.2 Understand the Position You Have Applied For

Re-familiarise yourself with the position description or advertisement which outlines the job. Make sure you understand it thoroughly and think about the types of questions that an employer might ask that relate to the position description. Know about what you have to offer and make a list of essential skills that they require. Write down a STAR example (See STAR Method on page 13 of this handbook) for each of the criteria so you can show how you have demonstrated this skill in your work or study environment. More comprehensive information on interview questions can be found in this handbook under Section 4 - Interview Questions.

2.5.3 Dress

Always dress professionally for an interview. Although they know you are a student, interviewers expect professional dress and behaviour. Organise your clothes for the interview in advance. Dress formally (a suit for both men and women is the norm) and match your clothing to the image of the company. Women should always wear closed-toe shoes, and stockings if wearing a skirt. Little details such as a good haircut, no missing buttons or hanging threads may seem minor but they are vital in creating that first impression. Do not wear excess jewellery, perfume, after-shave or extreme hairstyles.



2.5.4 Punctuality



Always leave extra time to get to the interview in case you run into traffic or experience problems on public transport, or to secure a carpark (2 hour minimum). It makes a very poor first impression if you are late for your interview. Plan to get there 10 minutes before the scheduled interview so that you have time to read through your notes and gather your thoughts. If you can, find out how long the interview is expected to last. Do not make appointments immediately following your expected completion time as you don't want to feel rushed.

2.5.5 Documentation

You should take a neat presentation folder containing:

- Address, contact name and phone number of the organisation where you have the interview;
- Your résumé (additional copies can be useful for panel interviews);
- Academic transcript;
- A list of questions that you want to ask the interviewer;
- Any relevant major project/s completed at University.

3. THE INTERVIEW

3.1 The Initial Stages of the Interview

- Be polite. Show respect to everyone you meet, from the boss to the receptionist.
- You only get one chance to make a first impression. Make it a good one. Smile, make eye contact and use a firm handshake.
- Interviewers frequently use 'small talk' to break the ice. Follow the interviewer's lead, but don't initiate a lot of small talk yourself, as this could make you seem too familiar or too relaxed.

3.2 The Interview Structure

- No two styles of interviewing are the same but interviewers usually value warmth, honesty, energy, clear communication, brevity, rapport and enthusiasm. Also it is vital to look into the interviewer's eyes.
- Usually the interviewer gets information from you and then tells you about the position. However, the order of the interview will depend on the interviewer themselves. Go with the flow.

3.3. Nervousness During an Interview

- It is completely normal to be anxious during an interview. This energy is positive and can help you give a high energy performance. If, however, you feel your body language is conveying anxiety, it is usually best to mention it. (E.g. 'I haven't had an interview before and I am a little nervous').

3.4. Questions to Ask the Employer

Prepare relevant questions to ask towards the end of the interview. Remember you must learn as much as you can about the job in order to determine if it is suitable for you. Some good questions include:



- How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
- What are the organisation's plans for growth?
- Would you tell me about current and future training programs?
- How would you describe the management style of the person supervising this role?
- What are your expectations of new staff?
- What characteristics does a successful person have at your organisation?
- What long term career opportunities are available?

You can also use this valuable time at the end of the interview to re-emphasise your strengths which will leave the interviewers with a positive last impression.

- Ask (if you haven't been told) what the process will be after the interview has been completed.
- Give the interviewer a couple of positive statements which link your competencies and experience with those sought for the job. Do not be afraid to reiterate your strengths – as they relate to the role. Be careful to be brief!
- If you are genuinely interested in the role, say so.
- Leave the interviewer with a good impression – smile and shake hands firmly. Do not make the mistake of being overconfident or too relaxed at the end of the interview.

3.5. Follow Up

- If you have been asked to send further information, do so quickly and efficiently.
- If appropriate, after the interview email the manager or HR person indicating your interest in joining the organisation.

3.6. Common Traps

- Being too friendly or too casual.
- Not listening to questions carefully and therefore giving inappropriate answers.
- Saying 'we' instead of 'I'. Not referring to your own actions or achievements is very irritating for an interviewer.
- Making very general statements which lack substance.
- Being over enthusiastic.
- Being poorly prepared.
- Slouching, mumbling, speaking slowly and not having eye contact with the interviewer.
- Knowing nothing about the company to whom you are applying.
- Making derogatory remarks.

3.7. Helpful Hints

- Not all the positions you apply for are right for you. The purpose of the interview is to help you sort out if the 'fit' is right in both a job and cultural sense. You must ask questions which will give you information pertinent to your decision making. The last thing you want on your résumé is a short stint in a job to explain to your next employer.
- Learn from other candidates who have gone for job interviews in the same industry. Discuss unexpected interview questions and their responses.
- Remain positive, no matter how you felt the interview went. This might not be the right job for you, but they might have another one coming up.

4. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Employers usually use two types of interview questions – Directed Questions and Behavioural Questions – and will generally use a combination of these during any one interview.

4.1 Directed Interview Questions

A Directed Interview is around specific questions instead of an open discussion. They can be seen as easier for employers but may fail to extract as much information as Behavioural Interviewing.

Some Typical Directed Interview Questions:



- Why do you like Victoria University?
- Why did you decide to specialise in?
- What school subjects did you enjoy most and why?
- What is your ultimate ambition?
- Where do you expect to be in five years?
- What do you know about our company?
- Why do you want a position in this company?
- What do you look for in a job?
- Would you be willing to work overtime?
- What kind of management style do you prefer?
- What skills do you possess that would help us select you for employment?
- What is your greatest strength? What is your greatest weakness?
- What are your hobbies?

4.2 Behavioural Interview Questions

Behavioural interviews are extremely common among both small and large employers, therefore it is essential that you have an understanding of what they are and how to prepare for them.

4.2.1 What is a Behavioural Interview?



Behavioural interviewing is based on the premise that past behaviour is the best indicator of future performance in a similar situation. Behavioural questions are used as an objective and reliable method of comparing candidates and assessing them against the selection criteria. The questions are posed in such a way to draw out behavioural examples that are used to evaluate the presence or absence of a critical skill or attribute and therefore allows the interviewer to determine whether you have the ability to do the job.

You must be prepared to share examples of achievements, failures and past behaviours and talk about them in detail. Ensure you describe the situation, the action you took and the results of your action and ensure you present your actions in a positive way. The most effective way to answer these types of questions is with the STAR Method (See page 13 of this handbook).

It is essential to provide specific examples of how you behaved in certain situations, to discuss your own actions (use “I” not “we”), and to not use hypothetical situations about what you “would do” in a certain situation – talk about what you actually did.

Behavioural questions usually begin with a statement like: “Tell me about a time when..” or “Can you describe a situation where..” In your answer you must discuss a situation where you demonstrated the skill or competency the interviewer is referring to.

You can predict the type of behavioural questions that you might be asked in an interview by reading through the position description, highlighting the key skills, and reflecting upon your own experiences in which you demonstrated these skills.

Be careful not to create any negative perceptions through your answers. (For example, “weaknesses” should always be followed up with examples of corrective, successful action that you have taken to overcome the stated weakness).

Practise answers to interview questions by writing them down in bullet point form. When practising, answer each question out loud so that eventually each answer “rolls off the tongue” so that you sound as articulate and confident as possible. Just ensure that you don’t sound too rehearsed.

4.2.2 What is the STAR Method?

This is a simple method that assists you in answering behavioural interview questions. When this method is used effectively, employers can hear very clear examples of how you have demonstrated the skills they are seeking. A complete behavioural interview question response will include ALL of the following components The STAR method involves the following 4 steps:

<u>S</u>ituation	Give a brief outline of the situation or setting . Who was involved?
<u>T</u>ask	What was the issue your role ? What was required of you?
<u>A</u>ction	What did you do? What action did you take? (Use 'I' not 'we'). Explain in sequential steps what your response was to the situation. Show how you used the skills that the employer has asked for in the advertisement. Keep the information short - one or two sentences are much better than a long story with unnecessary detail. Explain how you used the skill in each situation.
<u>R</u>esult	What was the result ? What feedback did you receive? How did it develop your skills? What did you learn from this situation?

2 sample questions and examples of how to respond to them using the STAR Method are listed below.

Can you tell me about a time when you have made a suggestion in your workplace that has improved productivity?’ (This question is assessing the skill/competency “Initiative”).

Situation “Yes – I noticed a number of staff had troubles completing the quality control check at the end of shifts. This affected them but also the person on the next shift coming in to take over that position on the assembly line.”

Task “What I did was draft up a checklist form which listed all of the processes in the order that the quality control check should be conducted.”

Action “I went to the boss and showed him my suggestion and talked about the way in which it could improve the time taken to conduct the quality control check and the handover process to the next shift.”

Result “The boss was happy with my suggestion and after making a few minor changes he had it typed up and introduced it as a standard form that everybody used. It saves a lot of time for everyone as well as reducing the number of errors.”

Tell me about a time when you demonstrated strong time management skills? (This question is assessing the skill/competency “Time Management”)

Situation Last semester I decided that I wanted to enhance my studies in Accounting by obtaining some work experience.

Task I took the initiative to secure work at ABC Accounting Pty Limited. This voluntary work was not a requirement of my course, but I did it to build on the knowledge gained during my studies.

Action As preparation for the work experience it was necessary for me to reschedule my classes and reorganise my study timetable. In order to handle the additional workload, I decided to get up half an hour earlier each weekday and to study for an additional two hours each Saturday and Sunday. I listed each study period as a diary appointment, which made it easier for me to arrange commitments around these times. I also ensured that I continued with my work experience even during examination time by negotiating my work schedule with my manager at ABC.

Result As a result of my effective time management skills I successfully integrated the work experience into my timetable. The voluntary work gave me valuable practical skills to also deal with conflicting priorities whilst ensuring I completed all assignment deadlines to schedule.

Some Typical Behavioural Interview Questions:



- What have you done when the standard of work completed, either by yourself or others, was not up to your expectations? Give me an example.
- We all miss deadlines from time to time. Can you give me an example when you missed a deadline? What were the causes?
- It is very easy to get distracted from study or work. Has this happened to you? What did you do about it?
- Describe a time when you have felt most stressed. What caused this? How did you deal with it?
- Can you provide some examples of where you did more than what was required in your job ... or in your course?
- Have you had any difficulty getting on with team members? How did you handle it?

EXAMPLES OF FURTHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, BOTH DIRECTED AND BEHAVIOURAL, ARE OVERLEAF.

5. SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about yourself.

Why did you choose to study your particular course?

Why are you interested in this position?

What do you know about our organisation?

Why would you like to work for our organisation?

What are your strengths? Do you have any weaknesses?

What computer packages are you familiar with and what have you used them for?

Tell me about a time when you had competing demands on your time. How did you prioritise what you should deal with first?

Have you ever missed a deadline? If so, why?

Tell me about a time when you weren't pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?

Can you think of a time when you did more than your job required. i.e. exceeded your manager's or a customer's expectations of you?

Have you ever had to deal with a difficult customer? What was the situation and how did you handle this?

Have you ever had any problems with a colleague/manager? What was the situation and how did you handle this?

Describe one of the highest-pressure situations you have been in and the strategies you used to get through it.

Tell me about a time when you couldn't complete a project/task in the scheduled time. What did you do?

Do you have experience working in teams and what type of people do you like to work with?

Tell me about a time when you have been required to perform as part of a team. What was the situation, what part did you play and what was the outcome of the exercise?

Tell me about your experience working autonomously. How do you motivate yourself?

Tell me about a time when you have had to quickly grasp a new concept or task.

Tell me about a time when you have picked up an error in your work or somebody else's.

Tell me about a time when you have had to be very accurate in the work that you are doing (at university or work).

How do you go about developing rapport with others?

What has been your greatest achievement so far?

Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

Give me an example of a time when you had to effectively communicate something to others verbally.

Give me an example of a time when you had to effectively communicate something to others in writing.

What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort? Describe a situation in which you did so.

Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

Tell me about a time you have used your creativity to solve a problem.

Tell me about a situation where you had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?

Tell me about a time when you found a better way of doing something, which proved to be an improvement on the existing system.

If you saw a co-worker doing something dishonest, would you tell your boss? What would you do about it?

Sometimes we have to bend the truth a little when dealing with people. Can you give me an example of when you have had to bend the truth?

Why should we hire you? What do you think sets you apart from other candidates?



6. RESOURCES



This list provides some basic additional references in relation to preparing applications and recruitment. While it is not an exhaustive list, it does provide references to some useful general resources. You can check the library and search the internet for additional resources.

Student Career Development
www.vu.edu.au/careers

Graduate Careers Australia
www.graduateopportunities.com

MyFuture: Australia's career information service
www.myfuture.com.au

Résumés in the real world [video]

Stevens, Paul. The Australian résumé guide: making your job application work, 2003.

Victoria University Library
www.vu.edu.au/library

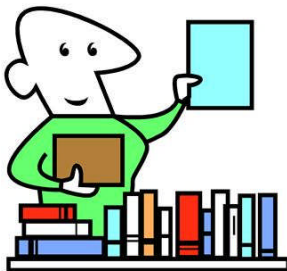
Volunteering Victoria
www.volunteeringvictoria.com.au

DeLuca, Matthew J and DeLuca, Nanette F. 24 hours to the perfect interview: quick steps for planning, organising and preparing for the interview that gets the job. McGraw-Hill, c2004.

Interviews: do's and don't's [video]

Seek
www.seek.com.au

Spiropoulos, Michael. Interview skills that win the job: simple techniques for answering all the tough questions. Allen & Unwin, 2005.



INTERVIEW

TIP SHEET

1. Preparation prior to interview

- Organise your clothes for the interview in advance. Dress formally (a suit for both men and women is the norm) and match your clothing to the image of the company. Little details such as a good haircut, no missing buttons or hanging threads may seem minor but they are vital in creating that first impression.
- Assemble any relevant documentation beforehand (qualifications, academic transcript, relevant university assignments etc.).
- Research the company thoroughly using the internet, published material and personal contacts, so that you are able to ask 'intelligent' questions.
- Interviewers usually ask questions about practical examples of past behaviour which help demonstrate your competencies. This is known as Behavioural Interviewing and most companies use this technique. You must be prepared to share examples of achievements, failures and past behaviours and talk about them in detail. Ensure you describe the situation, the action you took and the results of your action and ensure you present your actions in a positive way (See the STAR Method handout).
- Know about the job and what you have to offer. Read the job ad and position description and make a list of essential criteria and skills that they require. Write down a **STAR example** for each of the criteria so you can show how you have demonstrated this skill in your work or study environment.
- Practise answers to interview questions by writing them down in bullet point form. When practising, answer each question out loud so that eventually each answer “rolls off the tongue” so that you sound as articulate and confident as possible. Just ensure that you don't sound too rehearsed.
- Plan your transport to ensure you get there 10 minutes before the scheduled interview so that you have time to read through your notes and gather your thoughts. Be sure to allow for traffic delays.
- Find out how long the interview is expected to last. Do not make appointments immediately following your expected completion time as you don't want to feel rushed.

2. The Initial Stages of the Interview

- Be polite. Show respect to everyone you meet, from the boss to the receptionist.
- You only get one chance to make a first impression. Make it a good one. Smile, make eye contact and use a firm handshake.
- Interviewers frequently use 'small talk' to break the ice. Follow the interviewer's lead, but don't initiate a lot of small talk yourself, as this could make you seem too familiar or too relaxed.

3. The Interview Structure

- No two styles of interviewing are the same but interviewers usually value warmth, honesty, energy, clear communication, brevity, rapport and enthusiasm. Also it is vital to look into the interviewer's eyes.
- Usually the interviewer gets information from you and then tells you about the position. However, the order of the interview will depend on the interviewer themselves. Go with the flow.

4. Nervousness during an interview

- It is completely normal to be anxious during an interview. This energy is positive and can help you give a high energy performance. If, however, you feel your body language is conveying anxiety, it is usually best to mention it. (E.g. 'I haven't had an interview before and I am a little nervous')

5. Finishing the interview

- Prepare relevant questions to ask towards the end of the interview. Remember you must learn as much as you can about the job in order to determine if it is suitable for you. Some good questions include:
What sort of work will I be doing?
What are the key responsibilities of this role?
What are the reporting relationships?
How will my performance be measured?
What is the next step?
What long term career opportunities are available?
- Ask (if you haven't been told) what the process will be after the interview has been completed.
- Give the interviewer a couple of positive statements which link your competencies and experience with those sought for the job. Do not be afraid to reiterate your strengths – as they relate to the role. Be careful to be brief!
- If you are genuinely interested in the role, say so.
- Leave the interviewer with a good impression – smile and shake hands firmly. Do not make the mistake of being overconfident or too relaxed at the end of the interview.

6. Follow up

- Immediately after the interview email the manager or HR person indicating your interest in joining the organisation.
- If you have been asked to send further information, do so quickly and efficiently.

7. Common Traps

- Being too friendly or too casual.
- Not listening to questions carefully and therefore giving inappropriate answers.
- Saying 'we' instead of 'I'. Not referring to your own actions or achievements is very irritating.
- Making very general statements which lack substance.
- Being over enthusiastic.
- Being poorly prepared.
- Slouching, mumbling, speaking slowly and not having eye contact with the interviewer.
- Knowing nothing about the company to whom you are applying.
- Making derogatory remarks.

8. Helpful Hints

- Not all the positions you apply for are right for you. The purpose of the interview is to help you sort out if the 'fit' is right in both a job and cultural sense. You must ask questions which will give you information pertinent to your decision making. The last thing you want on your resume is a short stint in a job to explain to your next employer.
- Remain positive. No matter how you felt the interview went. This might not be the right job for you, but they might have another one coming up.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about yourself.

Why did you choose to study your particular course?

Why are you interested in this position?

What do you know about our organisation?

Why would you like to work for our organisation?

What are your strengths? Do you have any weaknesses?

What computer packages are you familiar with and what have you used them for?

Tell me about a time when you had competing demands on your time. How did you prioritise what you should deal with first?

Have you ever missed a deadline? If so, why?

Tell me about a time when you weren't pleased with your performance? What did you do about it?

Can you think of a time when you did more than your job required. i.e. exceeded your manager's or a customer's expectations of you?

Have you ever had to deal with a difficult customer? What was the situation and how did you handle this?

Have you ever had any problems with a colleague/manager? What was the situation and how did you handle this?

Describe one of the highest-pressure situations you have been in and the strategies you used to get through it.

Tell me about a time when you couldn't complete a project/task in the scheduled time. What did you do?

Do you have experience working in teams and what type of people do you like to work with?

Tell me about a time when you have been required to perform as part of a team. What was the situation, what part did you play and what was the outcome of the exercise?

Tell me about your experience working autonomously. How do you motivate yourself?

Tell me about a time when you have had to quickly grasp a new concept or task?

Tell me about a time when you have picked up an error in your work or somebody else's?

Tell me about a time when you have had to be very accurate in the work that you are doing (at uni or work)?

How do you go about developing rapport with others?

What has been your greatest achievement so far?

Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

Give me an example of a time when you had to effectively communicate something to others verbally?

Give me an example of a time when you had to effectively communicate something to others in writing?

What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort? Describe a situation in which you did so.

Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

Tell me about a time you have used your creativity to solve a problem.

Tell me about a situation where you had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?

Tell me about a time when you found a better way of doing something, which proved to be an improvement on the existing system.

If you saw a co-worker doing something dishonest, would you tell your boss? What would you do about it?

Sometimes we have to bend the truth a little when dealing with people. Can you give me an example of when you have had to bend the truth?

Why should we hire you? What do you think sets you apart from other candidates?

STAR METHOD

PREPARING FOR A BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW

What is a Behavioural Interview?

Behavioural interviewing is based on the premise that past behaviour is the best indicator of future performance in a similar situation. Behavioural questions are used as an objective and reliable method of comparing candidates and assessing them against the selection criteria. The questions are posed in such a way to draw out behavioural examples that are used to evaluate the presence or absence of a critical skill or attribute and therefore allows the interviewer to determine whether you have the ability to do the job.

Behavioural questions usually begins with a statement like: 'Tell me about a time when...' or 'Can you describe a situation where...'. In your answer you must discuss a situation in which you demonstrated the skills the interviewers are referring to.

When answering behavioural questions, you must give specific examples to show how you behaved in certain situations. When answering these questions, ensure that you describe a situation, what you did and what the result was. The most effective way to answer these questions is with the STAR Method. You can predict the type of behavioural questions that you might be asked in an interview by reading through the position description, highlighting the key skills, and reflecting upon your own experiences in which you demonstrated these skills.

What is the STAR Method?

This is a simple method that assists you in answering behavioural interview questions. When this method is used effectively, employers can hear very clear examples of how you have demonstrated the skills they are seeking. The STAR method involves the following 4 steps:

Situation	Give a brief outline of the situation or setting . Who was involved?
Task	What was your role ? What was required of you?
Action	What did you do? What action did you take? (Use 'I' not 'we'). Explain in sequential steps what your response was to the situation. Show how you used the skills that the employer has asked for in the advertisement Keep the information short- one or two sentences are much better than a long story with unnecessary detail. Explain how you used the skill in each situation.
Result	What was the result ? What feedback did you receive? How did it develop your skills? What did you learn from this situation?

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS AND POSSIBLE ANSWERS ARE OVERLEAF.

Can you tell me about a time when you have made a suggestion in your workplace that has improved productivity?' (assessing the competency "Initiative")

Situation 'Yes – I noticed a number of staff had troubles completing the quality control check at the end of shifts. This affected them but also the next person on the next shift coming into take over that position on the assembly line

Task What I did was draft up a checklist form which listed all of the processes in the order that the quality control check should be conducted.

Action 'I went to the boss and showed him my suggestion and talked about the way in which it could improve the time taken to conduct the quality control check and the handover process to the next shift.'

Result 'The boss was pretty happy with my suggestion and after making a few minor changes he had it typed up and introduced it as a standard form that everybody used. It saves heaps of time for everyone as well as reducing the number of errors.'

Tell me about a time when you demonstrated strong time management skills? (assessing the competency "Time Management")

Situation Last semester I decided that I wanted to enhance my studies in Accounting by obtaining some work experience.

Task I took the initiative to secure work at ABC Accounting Pty Limited. This voluntary work was not a requirement of my course, but I did it to build on the knowledge gained during my studies.

Action As preparation for the work experience it was necessary for me to reschedule my classes and reorganise my study timetable. In order to handle the additional workload, I decided to get up half an hour earlier each weekday and to study for an additional two hours each Saturday and Sunday. I listed each study period as a diary appointment, which made it easier for me to arrange commitments around these times. I also ensured that I continued with my work experience even during examination time by negotiating my work schedule with my manager at ABC.

Result As a result of my effective time management skills I successfully integrated the work experience into my timetable. The voluntary work gave me valuable practical skills to complement the theoretical knowledge gained in my course. Restructuring my study schedule also enabled me to deal with conflicting priorities whilst ensuring I completed all assignment deadlines to schedule.